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Director of Training

18 September 1959

Plans and Policy Staff

Report on Language Development Program

1. [REDACTED] paper of 25 August is a very good exposition of how OTR stands with respect to the Language Development Program, and it contains a number of constructive suggestions and recommendations. Below are some additional comments and attached is a proposed reply to [REDACTED] 25X1A9a

2. The report covers the Voluntary Language Training Program and the Language Awards Program reasonably well, and the recommendations affecting these programs seem in order, at least for the present. With respect to the Directed Language Training Program, however, more vigorous action is indicated on the part of OTR than [REDACTED] has recommended. 25X1A9a

3. It seems clear that the directed program will never fulfill its intended purpose until CIA establishes the policy (and puts teeth in it) that certain categories of employees must acquire specified degrees of language skills. The experience of the State Department on this point is revealing. In 1956 a survey of officers in the Foreign Service revealed that fewer than 50 per cent had a speaking knowledge of any foreign language. The Foreign Service Institute at that time had an admirable language training capability but very little use was being made of it. Pressures exerted on the Department by Congress, by columnists, by influential public figures, as well as the force of circumstances, impelled the Secretary in November 1956 to establish the policy that:

each Foreign Service Officer "will be encouraged to acquire a 'useful' knowledge of two foreign languages, as well as sufficient command of the language of each post of assignment to be able to use greetings, ordinary social expressions and numbers; to ask simple questions and give simple directions; and to recognize proper names, street signs, and office and shop designations.

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The acquisition of a 'useful' knowledge, as defined, of one of the widely used languages... will be expected within the next five years or within five years of the date of appointment to the Foreign Service.... The acquisition of a second foreign language most appropriate to the Officer's area of development or of most assistance to him in his functional specialization will be encouraged."

One of the Officer's two languages is expected to be French, German, or Spanish. This policy is spelled out in Foreign Service Circular No. 227, 16 August 1957 and it has teeth in it; Officers who fail to measure up will find their advancement blocked. To supplement this policy, Foreign Service Circular No. 250, 27 August 1958, announced that language proficiency tests are mandatory for Foreign Service Officers, including those who claim no proficiency in any foreign language. The latter are given a form by the testing unit of FSI certifying compliance with the circular. Those who claim proficiency are given a thirty minute examination which tests their speaking and reading ability.

4. At a Senate Subcommittee hearing on 16 April 1959, Mr. Loy Henderson, Deputy Under Secretary for Administration, concurred in proposed legislation which would require that:

the Secretary of State "shall determine annually the number of Foreign Service Officer positions in a foreign country which should be occupied only by incumbents who have a useful knowledge of a language or dialect commonly used in such country. After December 31, 1963 the prescribed quota of language officers shall be maintained for each country; provided that the Secretary may make exceptions to this policy when special or emergency conditions exist. The Secretary shall establish foreign language standards for assignment abroad of Officers and employees of the Service and shall arrange for appropriate language training of such officers at the FSI or elsewhere."

This provision, or one similar to it, was approved by the Senate 10 September and probably will be enacted into law next year.

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5. The impact of these policies and policy intentions on the language training program in State has been electrifying. The table below shows the number of Foreign Service Officers on active duty in FY 1959 who had completed twelve or more weeks of intensive full-time language training in FSI programs. The total number of FSO's is approximately 3,500. The Department says the present stepped-up training program will continue until the objective is reached in 1962 or 1963 of having every Officer proficient in at least one foreign language. Thereafter about 250 students per year are expected to attend full-time language training courses.

<u>1946-54</u>	<u>1955</u>	<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1958</u>	<u>1959</u>	<u>Total</u>
101	18	62	100	328	430	1,039

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6. Inexorable pressures [redacted] from Congressional sources and from elsewhere are going to force CIA into a posture not unlike that of State with respect to foreign language proficiency. This is inevitable; the only question is whether we will stay ahead of such pressures or become the victim of them. Despite this conviction, I believe it impractical at this point to try to get a strong policy statement at the Agency level--or even the DD/P level--without some preliminary "conditioning." Probably the best way to accomplish this "conditioning" is to furnish top management: (1) the results of the language requirements survey [redacted] proposes to conduct, together with (2) an up-to-date inventory of the Agency's language skills. A separate study might be added to show the high proportion of individuals possessing advanced skills who came to the Agency during an era when recruitment standards did not favor so strongly the native-born, U. S. educated officer we are now hiring. This would highlight the "legacy" CIA has enjoyed in the advanced levels of language proficiency--a legacy which won't likely be renewed. CIA-sponsored training must hereafter supply most new requirements for advanced proficiency. [redacted]

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7. This sort of conditioning cannot fail to provoke reactions because proficiency is almost non-existent in some languages such as Vietnamese, Thai, Indonesian, etc. that are critical to current operations. Other languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese are known to only a tiny proportion of the total number of Agency employees who should be proficient in them. A thorough exposure of this situation ought to help set the stage for some meaningful policy pronouncements on language training.

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8. With the foregoing in mind, OTR should immediately step up the language testing program so our proficiency inventory will be accurate and valid. To date, only about 25 per cent of those Agency employees claiming language proficiency have been tested. An intensified program should be launched immediately to rectify this situation. A note to the Chief, LAS directing such action is attached.

9. When the facts mentioned in paragraph 6 are in hand, OTR should be ready to make use of them and to respond to requests for suggestions to resolve the dilemma which they will undoubtedly point up. We should then strive for policies which require at least these three things:

a. Determination of language proficiency standards, by career groups, for all CIA employees.

b. Identification of positions, or proportions of positions, in each CIA unit which should be occupied by qualified linguists--specifying in each case the languages and degrees of proficiency required.

c. Mandatory language proficiency testing for all employees required by the foregoing policies to have a language skill.



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